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Summary Conclusions of the African Commission on Events in Bangui during January and April 1979

(Informal French Translation)

The events which took place in Bangui in 1979 unfolded in three distinct stages:

In the month of January 1979, the pupils who had been expelled from the schools because they refused to wear the uniform which had been made obligatory demonstrated in a peaceful manner in the streets.

Very soon students joined them and all of the demonstrators demanded the payment of their scholarships. Parents whose salaries had not been paid for many long months joined the pupils and students. The peaceful march of 17 and 18 January was transformed into a veritable riot on 19 and 20 January, following the brutal intervention of the forces of order. The Emperor who admitted in our presence that the "Country was Burning", described the event as a "veritable war". The results of these riots were serious-13 dead and 60 wounded on various sides according to official estimates, and between 150 to 500 dead and 70 seriously wounded according to other sources of information. The Commission of Inquiry estimated for its part that at least 150 persons of all ages were killed during the January riots. The repression, which was severe, was marked by three events which appeared to us particularly atrocious:

A child of eight years was shot down at gunpoint by the Army Chief of Staff who knew him and who went to inform his parents. This scene remained engraved in the memory of all the witnesses. A girl of thirteen was shot down by a bullet in the back, in her own home and in front of her father. In the midst of the rioting, soldiers fired on members of the Red Cross who were wearing their insignias.

The second stage, which went from January to April 1979 and which can be called the "intermediary period", was marked by a situation of tension, especially in the schools, accompanied by student strikes and the publication of tracts denouncing the absolute power of the Emperor and demanding his abdication.

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-- The political authorities were persuaded, rightly so, that the movement had become politicized, since all of the demands had been satisfied, and proceeded to searches and arrests at meetings which had been banned.

-- The meetings shifted from the University towards populous neighborhoods and churches. Policemen who had infiltrated the meetings were unmasked and beaten. A soldier was stripped of this clothes in the street. Speakers demanded the resignation of the Emperor whose official car was set upon and damaged. On 17 April, vehicles and official residences were attacked and pillaged. Barricades were constructed. At this point began the massive arrests of 17, 18, and 19 April which marked the third stage.

The authorities of Bangui have created a total blackout on the events of the month of April or have categorically denied them or have given contradictory explanations.

-- It has, however, been established that children of young age have been arrested in buses and in houses while parents were at work.

-- Transported to Army and Gendarmerie barracks and to the Prison of Ngaragba, they were shot, beaten, mutilated, tortured and piled into narrow cells where certain ones died of asphyxiation.

The registry of the Prison of Ngaragba mentions 52 arrests, including children from 12 to 15 years and vagabounds.. No deaths were registered.

However, the Commission of Inquiry came to the conclusion that approximately 250 people, of which a majority were children, were arrested and detained at the prison of Ngaragba.

-- It can also conclude there were between 50 and 200 dead at the Prison of Ngaragba, the figure of 100 dead appearing to be closest to reality.

-- Statements of witnesses, precise, objective and confirming permit the affirmation that the children who were massacred were buried indiscriminately in communal graves scattered in several places or thrown into the river.

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-- The same statements by witnesses signal the presence of the Emperor three different times at the Prison of Ngaragba as well as his participation in the massacres which are said to have continued even at Berngon under his command.

In conclusion, the Commission of Inquiry considers that in the month of January 1979 at Bangui riots were atrociously put down by forces of order and that in the month of April 1979 the massacre of approximately 100 children was perpetrated under the orers of Emperor Bokassa and with his quasi-certain participation.

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